

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 MCT-01 /069 W  
-----312222Z 006101 /14

R 311413Z MAY 77  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3299  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
USCINCEUR

CONFIDENTIAL DAMASCUS 3408

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PLAB, SY  
SUBJECT: SYRIAN WORKERS DEMAND END TO GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION

1. REGULAR SYRIAN SOURCE MET MAY 26 WITH OFFICIAL WHO IS VETERAN BAATHIST AND SARG DEPUTY MINISTER. SOURCE REPORTED THAT HIS CONTACT DISCUSSED NUMBER OF RECENT EVENTS AFFECTING INTERNAL SITUATION. FIRST, CONTACT SAID THAT WORKERS AT KHUMASIYYAH FACTORY LOCATED IN DAMASCUS SUBURB HAD RECENTLY SUBMITTED PETITION SIGNED BY "HUNDREDS OF WORKERS" DEMANDING END TO SARG CORRUPTION AND MORE CONCERN FOR CITIZEN WHO SUPPOSED TO BENEFIT FROM SOCIALIST REGIME BUT; WHO IS IN FACT BURDENED BY ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. PETITION SENT TO GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR UNIONS (GCLU) WHOSE PRESIDENT, MAHMUD HADID, IN TURN BROUGHT IT TO ATTENTION OF BAATH PARTY REGIONAL COMMAND. SOURCE SAID HIS CONTACT TOLD HIM DOCUMENT CURRENTLY UNDER STUDY BY PRESIDENT AL-ASSAE, WHO IS "EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN DISCOVERING WHO ORGANIZED WORKERS" TO SUBMIT PETITION.

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2. SOURCE CONTINUED THAT HIS CONTACT, WHO IS CLOSE CONFIDENT OF PRIMIN KHULAYFAWI, TOLD HIM KHULAYFAWI HAD OFFICIALLY RESUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION TO ASSAD THREE DAYS PREVIOUSLY FOR THE PRESIDENT TO USE AT HIS DISCRETION.

3. SOURCE SAID CONTACT ALSO INFORMED HIM OF MEETING BETWEEN

OFFICIALS AT MINISTRY OF SUPPLY AND INTERNAL TRADE AND GROUP OF IMPORTANT SYRIAN IMPORTERS WHO PRESSED SARG TO RAISE CEILING ON PRICES THEY MAY CHARGE FOR GOODS THEY IMPORTING. MEETING LASTED FOR NINE HOURS MAY 26 AND TALKS WERE TO RESUME MAY 28. CONTACT INTERPRETED MEETING AS PRESSURE BY BUSINESSMEN ON SARG TO EXERCISE MODERATION IN REACHING SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL TO FREE MORE FUNDS FROM DEFENSE NEEDS TO DEVELOPMENT AND CONSUMER PURPOSES, AS WELL AS REFLECTION OF ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTING SOME IN BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

4. SOURCE CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT HIS CONTACT HAD INFORMED HIM AN ALAWITE CAPTAIN HAD BEEN KILLED IN DAMASCUS WITHIN PAST WEEK. CONTACT SPECULATED THAT ALWITES WOULD CONTINUE TO BE KILLED REGULARLY, AND SAID HE BELIEVED PERPETRATORS WERE PROBABLY OTHER ALAWITES BECAUSE "MANY IN THE ALAWITE COMMUNITY OPPOSE PRES. AL-ASSAD." HE TOTALLY REJECTED SOURCE'S SUGGESTION THAT IRAQIS MAY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF THE DEATHS. (NOTE: SUBSOURCE IN THIS REPORT IS INDIVIDUAL WHO IS ASSOCIATED WITH AFLAQ WING OF BAATH PARTY AND IS CONSIDERED RELATIVELY HONEST SARG OFFICIAL. IT IS PROBABLE THAT HIS REMARKS ABOUT IRAQ REFLECT HIS OWN BIASES, GIVEN AFLAQ'S IDENTIFICATION WITH BAGHDAD REGIME.)

5. COMMENT: IF IT IS TRUE THAT ASSAD TAKEN BY SURPRISE WITH WORKERS' DEMANDS, IT INDICATES A SERIOUS SLIP BY HIS SECURITY APPARATUS WHO PRESUMABLY WOULD BE EXPECTED TO BE AWARE OF PROJECT INVOLVING SUCH A LARGE NUMBER OF GRIEVANTS. CONFIDENTIAL

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KHUMASIYYAH FACTORY IS ONE OF LARGEST FACTORIES IN SYRIA AND EMPLOYS SEVERAL THOUSAND WORKERS. DEATH OF ALAWITE CAPTAIN HERE IN DAMASCUS REFLECTS CAPABILITY OF OPPOSITION ELEMENTS TO CONTINUE CAMPAIGN OF TERROR AGAINST ALAWITE OFFICIALS. MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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